

# Wisconsin State Management Plan Workshop Summary

Wisconsin (*Various Locations*)

October 4-6 and 11, 2005

## Scope

Wisconsin completed its *Comprehensive Management Plan To Prevent Further Introductions and Control Existing Populations of Aquatic Invasive Species* (AIS) in 2003 and is in the process of implementing the various components of that plan. To that end, Wisconsin Sea Grant conducted four workshops in association with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to train county conservation managers and other public and private stakeholders on AIS impacts, how to identify high risk AIS and provide the trainees with a newly developed AIS state resource handbook. The goal of the workshops is an educated and trained staff better able to assess AIS risks and prevention needs in their regions.

Wisconsin was the first of the Great Lakes states to conduct a state management plan (SMP) workshop for this project funded by NOAA's National Sea Grant Program. In addition to Phil Moy, Invasive Species Specialist for Wisconsin Sea Grant, speakers/facilitators included Wisconsin DNR invasive species team staff Mandy Beall, Laura Felda and Brock Woods. The format was a series of four workshops held throughout the state to promote and distribute their new educational handbook *Aquatic Invasive Species: A Handbook for Education Efforts*. This handbook is one of the first implementation efforts for Wisconsin under their newly approved SMP. The development of the handbook and workshops was a collaborative effort by Wisconsin DNR, Wisconsin Sea Grant, and University of Wisconsin Extension. The workshops were scheduled as follows:

- Madison, Wisconsin: October 4, 2005
- Stevens Point, Wisconsin: October 5, 2005
- Minocqua, Wisconsin: October 6, 2005
- Minong, Wisconsin: October 11, 2005

The target audiences for these workshops primarily included personnel from various state agencies, educators, and lake association members or other concerned property owners. The focus was primarily on preventing and controlling the spread of AIS from the Great Lakes and between inland waterbodies.

## Role of the Great Lakes Commission

The primary role of the Commission at the workshops was to observe the proceedings and summarize and document the outcomes as required under the grant. This workshop summary will be disseminated along with the other summaries of workshops, held under the grant for use as background material to be dispersed to each of the Great Lakes states prior to a culminating regional summit, which is also called for under the grant. Based on these summaries, each state will be able to understand what the other Great Lakes states focused on or accomplished at their SMP workshop or series of workshops. It is hoped that this background material and the information discussed at the regional summit will help the Great Lakes states work together to develop priorities and implementation actions addressing AIS issues on a regional scale, such as AIS spread and control in the Great Lakes states.

## Workshop Content

Each Wisconsin workshop in the series followed basically the same format and agenda (refer to <http://glc.org/ans/initiatives.html#advance>), driven primarily by the AIS educational handbook. Questions and discussion did vary by location as noted below. Phil Moy, the project lead from Wisconsin Sea Grant, opened each workshop with a brief overview of the traits of invasive species and their impacts. His presentation then focused primarily on pathways for AIS introduction, such as ballast water, unintentional introductions, intentional introductions, canals, and boaters and anglers. Moy

explained that in the past, barriers existed that prevented species from moving out of their native ranges such as oceans, waterfalls, and even water pollution. Given the continuing increase in shipping and other forms of global movement, as well as cleaner water due to new regulations, most of these historical barriers that have prevented AIS from invading in the past have been eliminated. An important point brought up by Moy, based on the audience, handbook, and purpose of the workshops, was that out of the eleven identified mechanisms for AIS spread and introduction, ten are either chiefly or solely the result of human activities, with dissemination by wind and currents being the only one that is not. He noted the significance of this observation, indicating the potential for improvement that humans could make on the AIS issue if behavioral practices of high risk mechanisms were altered, which was the fundamental goal for the handbook and associated workshops. People in attendance were encouraged to learn how to change their own behaviors based on the information presented at the workshops. Efforts should also be made to teach others based on the lessons learned at the workshop. It was noted that this type of information dissemination has the potential to grow exponentially if disseminated to an appropriate target audience that is well engaged.

Moy also discussed management measures for AIS introduction and spread, stressing that prevention is critical, since it is difficult or impossible to eradicate an invasive species once it has become established. Ballast water management, education, management and control, and barriers were also discussed as control methods. Updates on the current status of the electrical barrier for Asian carp in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal were given, as well as the status of research on various types of barriers for other rivers and canals connecting the Great Lakes to carp-infested waters.

Following introductory remarks, the AIS educational handbook was covered by Mandy Beall or Laura Felda-Marquardt, both from the Wisconsin DNR and the University of Wisconsin Extension, depending on the day of the workshop. They explained that the purpose of the educational handbook was to compile much of the information available on AIS into one package so that it is easier for educators, agency representatives, and citizens to access these resources and utilize. The handbook is available online (<http://www.uwex.edu/erc/AquaInvHandbook.html>) so that it is easily accessible to any interested person. An accompanying CD is included with the disseminated handbooks, and its contents are also available online. The resources on the CD not only include the entire handbook, but many other resources such as fact sheets and brochures that lake associations, citizen's groups, and other interested parties can use when building a coalition. Some of the main components of the handbook include an introduction to AIS issues, highlights on national AIS initiatives and problems, some Wisconsin state-wide AIS programs, the basics on how to design an educational campaign, case studies of effective educational campaigns with engaged citizens, available resources and contact information, species-specific information, and measures to prevent AIS introduction and spread.

At respective workshops, Beall and Felda-Marquardt described a state-wide volunteer based initiative called *Clean Boats-Clean Waters*. The purpose of this program is to recruit and train volunteers to visit boat landings throughout the state and educate boaters on how to properly clean their boats to prevent AIS introduction from one lake to another. Another program that was highlighted was the purple loosestrife biocontrol program, presented by Felda-Marquardt or Brock Woods, also from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin Extension. This program utilizes volunteer citizens to raise Galerucella beetles that are native to the part of Europe where purple loosestrife originates and exclusively feed on the plant. The predation on the purple loosestrife by the beetle keeps the plant abundance low enough so that they do not out-compete native wetland plant species.

### **Implications and Lessons Learned**

As noted above, education and outreach is a critical part of implementing AIS prevention and control strategies since human activities account for a significant level of new AIS introductions. It was noted, however, that the educational handbook is just one step in the implementation of Wisconsin's SMP. Incentives and regulations were also covered at the workshops as other key components of AIS control

and management. Education is instrumental in bringing incentives and regulations to fruition as was learned at the workshop. Many people who attended the workshops, especially at Minocqua, were affiliated with a lake association. They are passionate about protecting their lakes from aquatic invasions. Those citizens informed on AIS issues have played an important role by contacting their representatives repeatedly about the AIS issues that are of concern. The Wisconsin DNR established AIS grants through for lake associations or other interested stakeholder groups to develop strategies for mitigation, education, rapid response, or other programs focused on AIS prevention and control. Concerned citizens were also a key player in establishing the *Illegal to Launch Law*, which prohibits launching a boat with invasive plants or zebra mussels attached. To strengthen this law, there is a push to add an illegal to transport component that would require boats leaving AIS infested lakes to clean all the AIS off their boats. This effort would lower the risk of AIS being transported to an uninfested lake where they could be introduced and become established. It was also noted that volunteers from the *Clean Boats-Clean Waters* program have been instrumental in helping with the *Illegal to Launch Law* by informing boaters of the regulations when launching boats at public sites. They reported that most boaters are cooperative when informed about the AIS issue and reasons for the regulation. Only one citation for noncompliance has been issued since the inception of the law.

The workshops primarily focused on preventing and controlling AIS in inland lakes. This was likely due to the audience and the issues the AIS educational handbook was designed to address. It was noted, however, that the handbook will help empower people to educate others and build coalitions around a lake of common interest. On these relatively small inland lakes, recreational boating, bait, aquarium releases, and other individual actions are the primary cause of AIS introductions, and these pathways can be controlled, at least in part, by public education and outreach. It was noted that on the Great Lakes, individual actions also play a significant role with education serving as the basis for those actions. In addition, ballast water from shipping is the major pathway for AIS introduction into the Great Lakes, with regulation and standards, not education, serving as the most effective way to prevent these introductions.

## **Great Lakes Commission Comments**

Staff observed that workshop participants in Madison and Minocqua seemed to be generally more engaged than those at the Steven's Point workshop, asking more targeted questions related specifically to education and raising more AIS issues for discussion. It was also evident that the AIS issue is a significant concern in the northern region of Wisconsin near Minocqua given that the local television news station came to interview the workshop presenters. At the Minocqua workshop, many questions were raised and participants were passionately engaged in the discussion, offering to share their experiences, successes, and even failures. Suggestions were also shared about creative approaches being tried in efforts to deal with their local AIS problems, issues, or concerns.

One other important lesson learned from the Wisconsin workshops is the importance of inter-agency cooperation. The handbook and workshops were developed with cooperation through Wisconsin Sea Grant, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the University of Wisconsin Extension. The agencies were willing to share informational resources with staff from each agency contributing their respective expertise in developing the handbook. This collaborative approach helped raise the quality of the handbook in serving as an informational resource for workshop participants. The cooperation among agencies also helped to minimize duplication of effort. Effective inter-agency cooperation is a model and key lesson for other states engaged in the SMP process.